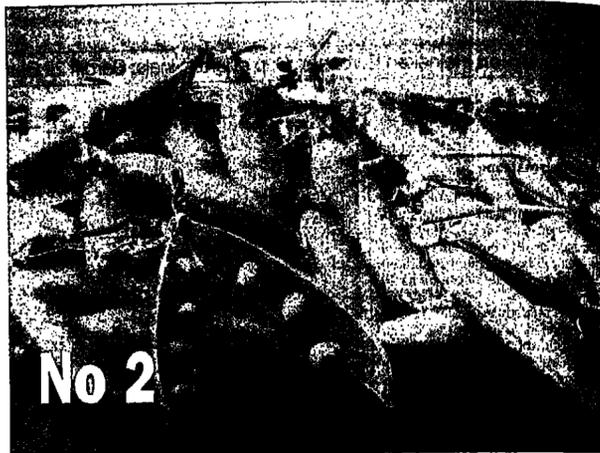


## Common myths about Offshore Banking



No 2

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# The Guardian

080 Weekly

## Serbs protest at election robbery

Julian Borger in Belgrade

**S**TUDENTS hurled eggs and abuse at public buildings on Monday as more than 100,000 demonstrators marched through Belgrade in an attempt to stop the government quashing an overwhelming opposition victory in last week's municipal elections.

The rally was the biggest protest so far against President Slobodan Milosevic, the Serbian leader who played a central role in the war which followed Yugoslavia's break-up five years ago.

Addressing the crowd gathered in central Belgrade, an opposition leader, Zoran Djindjic, said: "This is no longer an election rally or a protest rally. This is a democratic revolution that Serbia has been waiting 50 years for."

But the monolithic Milosevic regime appeared unmoved. The police shrugged. Street sweepers were deployed to remove the sticky yellow mess left by the student assault on the city council, the television building and the headquarters of the Socialist Party newspaper.

Ilija Djukic, the former Yugoslav foreign minister and adviser to the Zajedno (Together) coalition, compared the demonstrations to the protests in the first serious attempt to remove the communist regime in 1991. "Substantial changes, however fragile, have started for a second time," he said.

He had hoped to rally international support for the reform movement, but was disappointed with the meeting with ambassadors. "They said very little. They need Milosevic. He is guaranteeing the Dayton (Bosnian peace) agreement for them."

Disappointment with the West runs through the opposition ranks. The British embassy in Belgrade voiced concern when Socialist-dominated municipal courts annulled opposition wins in most of Serbia's major towns and cities in local elections on November 17. The US state department called the behaviour of

the regime "totally unacceptable".

"Where are the Western powers?" asked Srdja Popovic, who at 24 would have been the youngest elected member of the Belgrade city council if his 900-vote majority over his Socialist opponent had not been overturned. "A lot of people were looking to the West, but they are now disappointed."

He said the Socialists would not relax their grip on the big cities, because they would be the key to next year's national elections.

The election commission ordered a new round of voting this week, but Mr Popovic was adamant. "Why should I go to a new round of voting when I know that when I win again the result will be annulled?"

On the basis of provisional results last week, Zajedno claimed victory in 13 of the 18 largest cities in Serbia, including Belgrade. But the Socialists lodged protests, and the opposition's victories were either frozen, on the grounds of unspecified voting "irregularities", or reversed outright.

The unrest in Serbia has coincided with anti-government protests in neighbouring Croatia, triggered when the Zagreb authorities tried to close down Radio 101, the country's last independent station.

In both former Yugoslav republics, communist rule has been replaced by a hybrid of democracy and authoritarianism, characterised by strict state control over the media, weak opposition parties and government reluctance to accept opposition electoral gains.

Up to 100,000 demonstrators took to the streets of Zagreb on Thursday last week in a protest to save the popular Radio 101. "A quarter of the total Zagreb electorate took part in the protest. We really are talking about 'people power' here," one Zagreb-based diplomat said.

President Franjo Tudjman returned to Croatia last weekend after medical treatment in Washington. The 74-year-old president was being treated for stomach cancer.

## Budget leak probe called

**D**OWNING Street this week ordered MI5 to spearhead an inquiry into an unprecedented leak of details of most of Tuesday's Budget to the Daily Mirror, write Ewen MacAskill and Larry Elliott.

The inquiry began after the Mirror editor, Piers Morgan, returned the leaked papers to the Government without publishing them, one of the most extraordinary journalistic decisions of recent years.

It amounted to the biggest Budget leak this century, much more extensive than the leak that cost the Labour Chancellor Hugh Dalton his job in 1947. Up to 100 pages of press releases, intended for distribution

immediately after the Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, finished delivering Tuesday's Budget speech, were obtained by the newspaper on Monday.

After a day of intense argument among senior Mirror journalists, Mr Morgan opted to return them. He said publication would have been "fairly reckless". Downing Street later confirmed that the documents were genuine.

The inquiry will be co-ordinated by the Cabinet Secretary, Sir Robin Butler, and Special Branch. Sources indicated that MI5 would play a key role.

Tax bomb defused, page 8



Wreckage from the Ethiopian airliner lies in a lagoon off the Comoros

PHOTOGRAPH: JUDA NGWENYA

## Survivors tell of hijack crash horror

Ruaridh Nicol at Galawa Beach, Comoro Islands

**A**LARGE lump had emerged on Hiwot Tadesse's temple, but from her eyes anger and shock burned out. "The plane bumped and then went to pieces," she said. "The next thing I knew is that I'm half way into the water. I cried for help."

Lying in the next bed, Yeshimebet Gepreremstriel, Ma Tadesse's fellow air hostess, lay back. "I was under water — I think Hiwot pulled me out, but I don't know."

The survivors of the Ethiopian Airlines ET961 crash in the Comoros were still dazed from their journey under three deranged hijackers. Survivors have since been airlifted out of the island. Only the dead remain.

It was a trip that had begun early last Saturday in Addis Ababa and ended when the plane ran out of fuel and dove into the Indian Ocean at 3.20pm local time.

The airliner had 175 people on board; 48 survived. The Kenyan TV cameraman, Mohammed Amin, who captured the first pictures of the Ethiopian famine in 1984, was among the dead.

Six of the 12 Ethiopian crew survived, including the pilot, Captain Lau Abate, aged 42, and the co-pilot, Yonas Mekuria, aged 35, who had been badly beaten.

The hijackers were intent on reaching Australia despite the pilot's desperate pleas that he had only enough fuel for a routine one-and-a-half hour flight to Nairobi.

About 20 minutes after the plane had lifted off the three men stood up.

An Ethiopian passenger, Biserat Alemu, recalled: "They said, 'We escaped from prison. We are against the government. We are hijacking the plane. We have an explosive. If anybody moves, we'll explode it.'"

The pilots were reportedly told by the hijackers that they numbered 11. After four hours, the pilot realised there was no choice but to put down. The plane was over the Comoros, north of Madagascar. He told the passengers one engine had stopped and they were about to crash-land.

As the plane began to descend the co-pilot, who had been pulled from the cockpit by the hijackers, intervened. "He pushed in, and together the pilot and the co-pilot made the crash-landing," said Ma Tadesse.

Caroline Fotherby, a manager at the hotel Le Galawa, said: "All you could hear was the sound of an aeroplane falling. And then there was a bang. The plane hit once, then hit again and nose-dived."

Survivors said a wing clipped the water. Then the body of the plane slammed into the sea, bouncing and turning over at least once before it broke apart.

"The first bump was really gentle. Then the second one was really hard," said one passenger, Frank Huddle, the United States consul-general in Bombay. "The third one was even harder, like a 70mph auto accident. The last one was like an earthquake."

Mr Huddle, aged 53, who survived with his spectacles intact, said he and his wife Shanika clung to a passing windsurfer's board before being rescued by hotel staff. "I thought I was dead when we hit the water," he said. Ethiopian Airlines, which

marked its 50th anniversary earlier this year, has one of the best security records in the world.

Hijackings involving Ethiopian airliners have been characterised by a lack of clear political demands. As in the present case, the hijackers were desperate to leave Ethiopia.

"All the hijackers may be dead," Mary Ryan, the US assistant secretary for consular affairs, said on Monday. "What we are hearing is that the two people they arrested aren't hijackers — their story held up." The men are still being held in what the police call "protective custody". This would suggest that all three hijackers had died.

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Austria	AS30	Malta	€0c
Belgium	BF76	Netherlands	G 4.75
Denmark	DK16	Norway	NK 18
Finland	FM 10	Portugal	E300
France	FF 13	Saudi Arabia	SR 6.50
Germany	DM 4	Spain	P 300
Greece	DR 400	Sweden	SK 18
Italy	L 3,000	Switzerland	SF 3.30

### US dollar diplomacy lets China off the hook

IT WAS distressing to read about Wang Dan (China quick to put away dissident, November 10). The United States can express its concern that he was being tried for asserting rights guaranteed by Chinese law as much as it wants, because China will never budge since "it considers human rights performance an internal matter" (A brave man is sent down in Beijing, November 10).

How much longer will the US continue to choose "a policy of increasing engagement with China"? If the US truly and sincerely believes in better human rights for the Chinese people what is it waiting for before it takes some action? There are also implications for Hong Kong. If Governor Chris Patten does not stick to what he believes in, Hong Kong will not be as democratic as it is now. So until July 1, 1997, Hong Kong is quite safe but after that China will march in and impose its own system of government on the people.

As long as the US continues only to express its concern verbally, China won't give a damn — as has been proven countless times. If the US were to act economically against China, then perhaps it might listen because it is obviously interested in expanding its trade with the West. So until the day the US can see beyond the dollar sign, China will get what it wants.

Lorinda Lange-Willis, Funchal, Portugal

WHILE I do not agree with or condone China's repression of political discussion, I cannot see any justification for the US government's so-called "moral stand".

The US government's meddling in the affairs and in the murder of civilians in Cuba, Laos, Nicaragua, Afghanistan and Angola — to name a few — gives it little "moral ground" from which to cast its heavy-handed stones.

It is therefore with satisfaction that I learned that the US is at least getting its just desserts at the UN by being voted off a key financial committee (the prestigious Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budget Questions) for not paying its UN fees (now amounting to \$1.4 billion — equivalent to the UN's annual budget). Where do the moralisers feet stand on that broken promise?

Mark Horgan, Kunming, Yunnan Province, China

### Seeking an informed choice

IT IS unfortunate that Peter Greenshott (November 17) puts forward a series of specious arguments and personal attacks, most of which display arrogance towards the general public and environmental groups, and which don't contribute towards a discussion of the central problem of genetically engineered food: information, understanding, agreement and choice.

A free market is created when informed and willing buyers and sellers come together. There is clearly propaganda being paraded as "information" by both sides (business and environmentalists), neither of which shows any sign of trying to create understanding. This is what passes as "politics".

There have been too many instances in the recent past when "safe" new products have caused significant harm a considerable time after their introduction into the market. The public are signalling that it is time for scientists and governments to be more cautious. Insisting on clear labelling of new products helps drive this democratic discussion.

Simon Hodgson, Vienna, Austria

### Writers opposed to BBC moves

WE ARE deeply concerned about the consequences of John Birt's planned reorganisation of the BBC (BBC merges production, November 17). The implications are profoundly disturbing. The main aim is to enable the BBC to grab the commercial pickings of digital broadcasting. The thrust is towards homogenisation with the commercial sector. The emphasis is on delivery rather than content.

The range of voices on the BBC is diluted for commercial expediency. Britain will be the poorer. The BBC will have lost its distinctive remit, there will be no need for the licence fee and public service broadcasting will be dead.

The proposed division between the editorial, commissioning and scheduling department, and the programme-making department, ignores the fact that the writing and making of quality radio and television drama can flourish only as an organic process. The best programme-makers and writers can come up with the most suitable suggestions only if they are aware of the thinking behind commissioning policy.

The BBC's restructuring processes have excluded creative artists. The Writers' Guild was not approached for input. Nor have writers any clear idea of how we will be expected to liaise in the future, either with BBC Production (which will make our work) or BBC Broadcast (which will commission it). How does BBC management intend to keep its 250 promises to its viewers and listeners?

Alan Ayckbourn, David Croft, Alan Durr, Roy Galtun, Frank Muir, Jimmy Perry, Harold Pinter, Alan Plater, Jack Rosenthal, Wily Russell, John Wilsher, Victoria Wood and four others.

Writers' Guild of Great Britain, London

### Blame for Delhi disaster

THE MID-AIR collision over New Delhi needs to be seen against the general attitude of apathy and lack of strategic planning that symbolises almost every government department in India.

With the opening up of the Indian economy it was inevitable that air traffic would increase. Yet the ministry of aviation took its time to recognise the problem, although the Commercial Pilots' Association has consistently pressed the Indian government to modernise the antiquated system of air traffic control.

The government is right to order a judicial inquiry. But in India such inquiries are often subject to intense political pressure, which means that the real cause of the crash might never be made public.

Randhir Singh Bains, Gants Hill, Essex

BEFORE the break-up of the former Soviet Union, airline pilots commonly did not fly outside Soviet airspace. They therefore had no reason to learn English, the language of international aviation.

With the break-up and liberalisation of the former Soviet republics, these same pilots are now able to fly out of their national borders and across international airspace, but their understanding of English is often limited and sometimes non-existent. While technical difficulties may be to blame in this case, it is surprising that we have not had more such incidents.

Alexander Weir, Villa Louvigny, Luxembourg

### The right kind of aid money

ALEX DE WAAL makes many valid points about the need to regulate the use of aid money (Sorry St Bob, but it's time we banned aid, October 27). However, I think it is important to acknowledge that some aid money does "work".

There are many excellent people and organisations using participatory approaches to integrated, people-centred development. They aim to empower the poor so that they may have greater control over decisions that affect their lives. This is a strategy that encourages prevention rather than cure.

The organisation I work with continuously endeavours to improve the standard of the services we provide to our less fortunate partners. We also place great importance on sharing the knowledge that we generate through our own experiences, in order to assist other organisations.

I believe that the most effective way to regulate the use of aid money is through new attitudes to giving. Aid money is not, in itself, a gift to the poor. Aid money buys services which are supplied to the poor by intermediary developmental organisations. It may be easy to feel good about giving away a spare pound. It takes far more effort to take an interest in, and some responsibility for, the quality of the service delivery mechanisms. Many of us working with intermediary organisations would welcome such interest and support.

Cathy Short, International Institute of Rural Reconstruction, Manila, Philippines

### Briefly

WHEN we see images of hungry people being beaten back from UN food warehouses, our instinct is to deliver aid. Some 1.5 million lives in Central Africa now depend on a response, while many more will be involved in chaos and deprivation should we not act.

Within Zaire there are forces that seek to benefit from the total breakdown of civil welfare systems. In nearby countries there are other clients of chaos whose agendas are built on terror. The warring factions use innocent civilians and human targets to create their power bases.

The international force is therefore going to have to take over more than camps, airfields, radio stations and roads. It will have to stop the armed and those who supply arms.

David H W Grubb, Children's Aid Direct, Reading, Berkshire

IN YOUR October 27 issue, an article on the finance page states that the Helms-Burton bill to punish Cuba was voted into law after Cuba shot down a "civilian jet". This gave the impression that Castro's air force mercilessly blasted a passenger plane out of the sky. The single-engine aircraft in question was piloted by a CIA-linked group called Brothers to the Rescue, whose purpose was to drop propaganda leaflets and issue other provocations. In the past, small private planes have been widely used by covert US-backed expatriate groups to commit acts of terrorism, such as setting fire to crops and strafing buildings. Brothers to the Rescue had also been warned repeatedly not to violate Cuban airspace.

Glenn Ewua, Columbus, Georgia, USA

CAN anyone enlighten me as to how a 48-hour-week would affect the teaching profession? Several years ago a directive laid down the number of hours teachers were contracted to work. This was abandoned because teachers regularly exceeded these hours. Surveys have shown that many are working 55 to 70 hours a week. This results in tired and stressed teachers, many of whom are having to take early retirement on health grounds. When will teachers be allowed to exercise the right not to work more than 48 hours a week?

Glenn Ewua, Columbus, Georgia, USA

YASHAR KEMAL, one of Turkey's most famous authors, has fled his country and sought asylum in Sweden, according to friends and reports in the Swedish media.

A PROSECUTOR in Rome asked for Italy's prime minister, Romano Prodi, to be put on trial for corruption.

THE fire that destroyed Venice's La Fenice opera house was started deliberately and with the intention of razing the building to the ground, according to an expert study.

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### The Week

THE search for a new secretary-general to lead the United Nations has begun in earnest after the United States cast its veto to block Boutros Boutros-Ghali for a second term. Comment, page 12

LIBYA is inviting Arabs of all nationalities to apply to settle permanently in the country, despite its expulsion of thousands of Sudanese and Palestinian workers last year.

ALLEGATIONS that the Belgian deputy prime minister, Elio di Rupo, procured sex with under-age boys began to disintegrate as the sole witness against him was discredited as a fantasist.

THIRTY-NINE people were killed and 80 injured when a fire swept through a high-rise block in Hong Kong.

ANEWLY created court under the World Trade Organisation in Geneva has agreed to hear a legal challenge to the US Helms-Burton law by the European Union. The US has threatened to disregard any ruling that goes against the law, which aims to penalise countries trading with Cuba.

PRESIDENT Bill Clinton declared a state of emergency in Puerto Rico after 20 people were killed and at least 80 injured in an explosion at a shoe shop in San Juan.

A COURT in Tasmania sentenced the mass murderer Martin Bryant to life imprisonment for shooting 35 people at a tourist resort on the island in April.

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THE Sandinista (FSLN) leader Daniel Ortega has refused to accept the official proclamation of his defeat in Nicaragua's presidential elections, heralding a fresh bout of political instability.

NIGERIA, facing pressure to restore democracy and respect human rights, freed three human rights lawyers after nearly a year in jail without trial.

## Belarus leader gains free hand

David Hearst in Moscow

PRESIDENT Alexander Lukashenko of Belarus claimed a huge victory on Monday in a referendum to give him sweeping powers to reorganise parliament. He claimed that his draft constitution had won more than 70 per cent support, on a turnout of 84 per cent of the electorate. The opposition said there had been widespread rigging.

He told parliament, which failed last week to ratify a Kremlin-brokered compromise between him and his parliamentary opponents, that the result of the referendum would be legally binding.

The new parliament, which will be formed by the end of the year, will be considerably weaker: one of its two chambers will consist of the president's local representatives.

At his victory press conference, Mr Lukashenko said: "It will be very hard for my opponents to insist there were violations... The over-

whelming majorities won by all the president's questions speak for themselves."

Viktor Gonchar, who was head of the election commission until 10 days ago, said the turnout figure had been faked. "Even during the presidential campaign [in 1994], when political activity was at its highest, it was lower. The figures are simply fantastic." He was particularly sceptical of the last-minute "surge" in polling: in the last four hours, turnout jumped by 26 per cent.

Mr Lukashenko attributed the increase to people returning home from their dachas; Mr Gonchar said this effect had not been seen before. Semyon Sharetzky, the Speaker of parliament, described the referendum as a farce. "Nobody knows the total number of ballot papers issued, because they were printed by the presidential administration itself."

Five members of the European parliament invited to Minsk by Mr Sharetzky were not allowed to watch the ballot papers being counted.

Their leader, Herbert Bosch, said: "We saw some irregularities yesterday, but the question is whether the whole procedure is regular or not."

Opposition deputies are to press ahead with impeachment proceedings against Mr Lukashenko, which were due to resume this week. But he has warned the judges of the constitutional court that they will not be reappointed if they continue blocking his decisions.

It is not clear what else the opposition can do — Russia will not intervene on its behalf. The Russian leadership, the only outside force able to put pressure on the warring politicians in Belarus, drew back in despair last weekend to await the inevitable clash after the controversial constitutional referendum.

The Russian prime minister, Viktor Chornomyrdin, blamed both the Belarussian parliament and Mr Lukashenko for the collapse of an agreement he brokered last week which took the fangs out of the referendum result.

## Iraq agrees to deal on oil for food

Anthony Goodman in New York

IRAQ'S ambassador to the United Nations, Nizar Hamdon, said on Monday that Baghdad had agreed to all UN conditions that had held up implementation of an oil-for-food deal and predicted oil could start flowing in December.

He was speaking to reporters after meeting Chinnmaya Gharekhan, undersecretary-general of the UN, who heads a task force overseeing the deal which would permit the sale of \$2 billion of Iraqi oil over six months on a renewable basis.

The deal, concluded between Iraq and the UN in May but delayed because of differences over how it should be carried out, was to help ease the effects on ordinary Iraqis of crippling economic sanctions imposed soon after President Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait in August 1990.

One of the obstacles has been Iraqi insistence on controlling the number, make-up and freedom of movement of UN observers who would monitor arrangements on the ground. "All the aspects of the MOU [memorandum of understanding signed in May] have been discussed and they have been agreed upon," Mr Hamdon said, including the issue of UN observers.

Asked when Iraqi oil might begin to flow, he said: "December, I think, is the most likely time for the oil to start moving, because there is nothing else to impede the process."

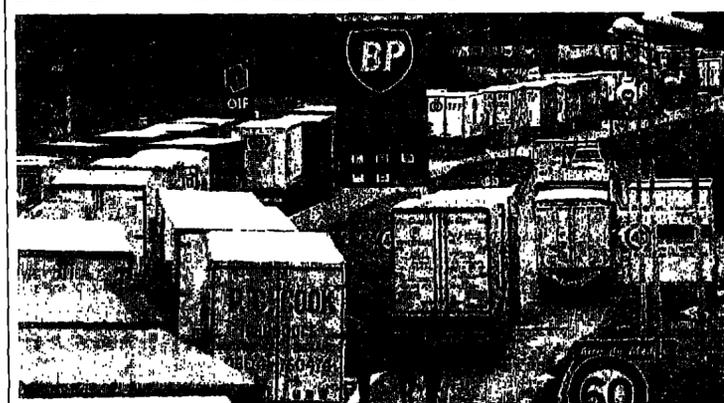
"Iraq now is ready for the smooth and easy implementation of the MOU," Mr Hamdon said, adding that he gave Mr Gharekhan a letter setting out "the official Iraqi acceptance" of the terms of the deal.

Mr Hamdon said a pipeline leading from northern Iraq to Turkey, through which the bulk of the oil was due to pass, "will definitely be ready by the first week of December. If the pricing formula is approved — which we hope to get this week — then nothing else remains."

He was referring to action by the Security Council's Iraqi sanctions committee, which must approve a formula governing oil sales contracts. Iraq submitted a formula for December last week.

The sanctions committee failed to approve formulas for previous months because the United States put the issue on hold until the remaining problems had been worked out.

Diplomats said Washington was currently studying the latest pricing formula and so far was looking at it favourably. — Reuters



Striking lorry drivers block the motorway into Bordeaux last week

PHOTOGRAPH BY REGIS DUJOURNAU

## French lorry drivers step up strike blockade

Keith Harper and Alex Duval Smith

A BLOCKADE by French lorry drivers intensified on Monday when police threatened to use tear gas to disperse British and French truckers in Calais.

The warning by French police followed a blockade by British drivers when 20 trucks stranded at Calais port said they would not move until the French lifted their action. They backed down to allow traffic through when the police arrived after several tense minutes.

The French drivers appeared to be attempting to seal off leading land and sea routes to France, by blocking Calais and Boulogne and hardening their action on the German, Belgian and Spanish borders.

As their protest entered its ninth day, the French prime minister, Alain Juppé, urged haulage companies to concede to some of their demands for shorter working hours and retirement at the age of 55.

Petrol was running out across France; supermarkets were bereft of supplies and there were further reports of factories having to slow production.

The communist-dominated CGT union, aware that the drivers have widespread support, called for sympathy strikes on Wednesday. Five rail unions and one taxi drivers union also called on members to support the protest "in ways they judge suitable".

The drivers are protesting against their employers' failure to respect an agreement in 1994 to gradually reduce their working month to 230 hours — about 56 hours a week. They have now increased their demands and are seeking payment for the time they spend waiting for goods to be loaded, and retirement at 55.

## Clinton coaxes a reluctant China

Nick Gunning-Bruce in Manila and Andrew Higgins in Hong Kong

BILL CLINTON moved closer to fulfilling one of his foreign policy priorities by agreeing last week to an exchange of visits with the Chinese president, Jiang Zemin.

Mr Clinton and Mr Jiang will hold summits in late 1997 and in 1998. The deal drew praise from Beijing and a sharp rebuke from the US human rights lobby.

Mr Clinton, who said he thought the meeting went very well, has made public his aim to pay the first presidential visit to Beijing since 1989. But the main US objective is to establish a framework for contacts to stabilise a relationship severely strained by disagreements on Taiwan, trade and human rights.

The US secretary of state, Warren Christopher, arranged the deal during a two-day trip to Beijing last week. In seven hours of talks with China's three top leaders, he stressed that "confrontation" and containment is not the direction the

United States is going with respect to China, and called for a new era of co-operation.

Mr Christopher's trip was itself the culmination of months of negotiation by senior administration officials, notably the national security adviser, Anthony Lake, to try to set the bilateral relationship on a more positive footing.

Chinese officials described the meeting as "friendly, positive and constructive".

Mr Clinton put China at the centre of US foreign policy for his second term last week, muting his concern for human rights and portraying China as a great power that will decide whether the 21st century brings peace or war.

In Canberra on the first leg of an Asian tour, he told the Australian parliament that Washington would keep 100,000 troops in the Pacific but did not seek to "contain" China's growing military and economic might.

"What the United States wants is to sustain an engagement with China," he said in his first major foreign policy speech since defeating Bob Dole.

Comment, page 12



# Gingrich extends the hand of co-operation



The US this week  
Martin Walker

While President Clinton was snorkelling over Australia's Great Barrier Reef last week and playing golf with Greg Norman, the politics which will determine his second term were taking shape in Washington. So far Clinton looks like finding more friends among the Republicans than among the Democrats.

After some harrumphing among conservative commentators and grandstanding congressmen like Peter King from Long Island, Newt Gingrich was easily re-elected Speaker of the House for the next session. Since he faces several ethical challenges in the coming term, and has been chastened by the loss of 10 seats, which shrinks his Republican majority perilously, Gingrich will return as an older, wiser and rather more distracted Speaker. He seems to be taking seriously the fashionable talk about governing in a bipartisan manner.

"President Clinton, as candidate, was for a balanced budget, for smaller government, for tax cuts, for welfare reform, and for an all-out effort to stop drugs. That's a ground where it seems to me we can do a lot of work together because we share the common direction."

"If the last Congress was the Confrontation Congress, this one will be the Implementation Congress, and we will be very pleased two years from now at how much we have implemented, working together and putting the nation first," Gingrich said in his first speech after beating back the challenge from Republican rebels to be re-elected Speaker for the next two years. "We bear the unusual burden of reaching out to a Democratic president and saying 'Together, we are in fact going to find common ground'."

He then lived up to this statement, allowing the Democrats extra seats on the important appropriations and commerce committees, which was decent of him. Moreover, the economic projections for the next few years of budget deficits are suddenly looking more rosy, thanks to better than expected tax revenues and the continued health of the economy. This has already slunk the current fiscal year's deficit from \$130 billion at the start of the year to \$107 billion. And by 2002, the target date the Republicans have set to achieve a balanced budget, the gap now looks to be less than \$150 billion, rather than the \$260 billion the Republicans had expected.

Meanwhile Gingrich's offer of bipartisan co-operation was being weighed by the deeply divided fac-

tions among the Democrats, who are now warring through their pollsters. On the left is Dr Stanley Greenberg of Yale, who was Clinton's pollster in 1992. His researches into the exit poll data persuaded him that Clinton was re-elected last month as a traditional Democrat who protected the welfare state and education from Republican cuts.

"It is the downscale, not the upscale, electorate that gave the Democrats the opportunity to win in 1996," Greenberg concludes, in a report commissioned by the liberal Democrats' new organisation, the Campaign for America's Future. Financed largely by the unions, it is run by Jesse Jackson's close adviser, Robert Borosage.

Another of the important institutions of the left, the Economic Policy Institute, produced a parallel analysis by Roy Teixeira, author of the important 1992 Brookings study, *The Disappearing American Voter*. He found that "three-quarters of Clinton's support came from non-college-educated voters, and that his support was primarily motivated by the economy and jobs, Medicare and social security, and education."

Clinton's vote rose by 9 points among the voters with only a high school graduation diploma (and by 13 points among women in this category). It rose 7 points by those with some college education, yet rose only 3 points among those with a college degree.

"Many observers credit Clinton's victory this year to his move to the centre as a New Democrat. But does the public actually consider Clinton to be a New Democrat?" Teixeira asks. "The polling data show that during the period when Clinton built his decisive lead over Bob Dole in the polls, the percentage of the public that thought Clinton was a new kind of Democrat actually decreased, reaching the lowest levels of his presidency... Clinton's political resurgence was based most fundamentally on defence of 'Old Democrat' programmes — Medicare, Medicaid, education and the environment."

By contrast, Clinton's pollster for 1996, the Harvard-educated Mark Penn, has just published a report which comes to entirely the opposite conclusion: that Clinton was re-elected because he convinced the voters that he was a New Democrat who was able to run against both the Republicans and the traditional liberal Democratic party.

The Democrats failed to regain a majority in Congress because they were not as successful as Clinton in convincing the voters that they were New Democrats, Penn argued. His analysis was commissioned by the centrist Democratic Leadership Council, which invented the idea of the New Democrat in the first place.

"The Congressional Democrats systematically deprived themselves of the greatest edge the party controlling the White House can have — a successful economy," Penn concluded. "They focused relentlessly on wage stagnation and the perceived lack of good jobs in their effort to attract voters without college degrees."

Polling analyses are highly influential in modern US politics, and these conflicting reports represent the opening shots in the looming Democratic debate. The clash will



come to a head in 1999, as Vice-President Al Gore, a New Democrat and founding member of the Democratic Leadership Council (along with Clinton), reaches for his inheritance as the party's next presidential candidate.

His most likely challenger is the party's leader in the House, Congressman Dick Gephardt, who is using the Greenberg data to insist that the Democrats must stick by their traditional constituency of high school graduates and those most vulnerable to any increase in the unemployment rate.

"Just which Democratic party is it we are trying to co-operate with? Is it the new guys or the old band?" grinned Republican party chairman Haley Barbour, as the battling pollsters laid out their data.

Some piquancy is added to the pollsters' debate by the role of Greenberg, who in 1992 was far more than just the pollster to the Clinton campaign — he was, in fact, a crucial adviser.

Greenberg, who is married to the liberal Democratic congresswoman Rosa DeLauro, had made his name as the laureate of Macomb County, a suburb of Detroit which seemed in the 1980s to sum up the Democratic predicament. The voters were white, modestly prosperous working class and lower middle class, with many Catholics and people from ethnic eastern European backgrounds.

THEY WERE natural and traditional Democratic voters, many of them union members, but they voted for Ronald Reagan in their droves. They responded to his patriotism, to his attacks on welfare, and abandoned a Democratic party they saw drifting too close to the concerns of the inner city and its inhabitants. They were the archetypal Reagan Democrats, and Greenberg's studies of Macomb County became the gospel of the Clinton campaign of 1992, which was determined to win them back.

In the April before the 1992 campaign, when Clinton was becoming assured of the Democratic party nomination, but was below both George Bush and Ross Perot in the opinion polls, Greenberg then launched the project which put Clinton into the White House.

"This report of the 'general election project' recommends a fundamental re-thinking of your campaign to reflect the new political realities and new phase of the cam-

paign and most important, to address the debilitating image that is dragging us down," his report began. "The core problem of the Clinton candidacy is Clinton's essential 'political nature'."

Greenberg went on to list the six main conclusions from a series of focus groups:

- Clinton is not real. He is packaged.
- Clinton is privileged, like the Kennedys.
- Clinton can't stand up to the special interests.
- Clinton cannot be the candidate of change.
- Clinton's for himself, not for people.
- Clinton's message-ideas are discounted.

"The campaign has to take radical steps to depoliticise Bill Clinton," the report notes and goes on to explain how and why. Greenberg and the campaign's media director Frank Greer had spent days poring over the gloomy and often contradictory reports of focus groups, trying to understand why Clinton was not connecting.

Greenberg had a hunch that while the political class knew about Clinton even before the primaries began, the public's first view of Clinton was in mid-scandal in New Hampshire. That was their image of him, a man constantly weaving to talk his way out of trouble. And in the absence of any counter-message, that image was taking firm hold.

Greenberg tried an experiment, making a brief video biography of Clinton with a few key facts. Here was a man born into a poor home, widowed mother, public schools, standing up to a drunken step-father, scholarships to Oxford and Yale but then came back home to be a reformist governor who created jobs, built schools and balanced his budgets.

Greenberg first ran a quick poll, asking the focus groups to list Bush, Perot and Clinton in order of preference. Clinton ran last. Then he offered the biography, and afterwards ran his standard tests of Clinton's views and speeches.

His first group contained 10 middle-aged, middle-class women from Pennsylvania. He polled them again. Clinton had gone from last to top in their preferences. Greenberg ran the same test on middle-aged men, blue-collar workers, elderly couples, and got the same result every time.

"Bingo," said Greer. "It's the magic bullet. They didn't know this guy. All we gotta do is tie down the American people and beat them over the head with his biography."

The rest, thanks also to Clinton's extraordinary campaigning skills, is history. But it also points to the fundamental hollowness of the pollsters' current debate. Clinton won the White House, in 1992 and in 1996, because he was Clinton: a campaigner, a flawed charmer, an engaging rascal whose very slipperiness tended to devalue the importance of the ideological themes of the New Democrat on which he campaigned.

IN CLINTON'S pragmatic view, the political purpose of the New Democrat ideology is to win over centrist, swing and independent voters to yield the essential margin of victory. The researches of Greenberg in 1992 helped Clinton to do that, but even though his findings are wholly justified by the data, they would not help the Democrats to carry the White House in future, or even to regain control of the Congress over the next four years.

The Democrats are a coalition, and need the insights of both Greenberg and Penn to guide them back to being the natural party of government. The greatest threat to the party over the forthcoming political season is continued division, while the Republicans have learnt their lesson and are trying to sound reasonable again.

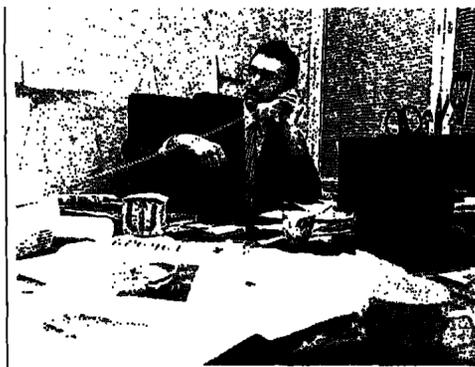
Of course, Gingrich being Gingrich, that may not last. After his thoroughly sensible speech about common ground and bipartisan legislative reforms, he went off into one of those grandiose socio-cultural riffs which threaten much but signify little.

"This country will never again be healthy if we don't have the courage to confront the spiritual and cultural and moral deficit that is an even greater threat to our future than the economic deficit," he intoned.

If Gingrich goes on like that, and the Democrats continue to do internal battle through their polling champions, then the only winner will be Clinton. He has learnt over the past two years the tactics of divide-and-rule, and now has the glittering new power of line-item veto over the details of any legislation that the Congress sends to him. No wonder he felt he could take time off to play golf with Greg Norman.

# Caught between Soviet devil and Baltic sea

James Meek in Pskov reports on the rise of nationalism in Russia's disaffected border region



IN THIS town, so the businessmen grumble, even the mafia is poor. "Do you know how many Mercedes 300s there are in Pskov? Only five!" declared the factory director indignantly, trying not to spill his vodka as the overnight express wobbled on its 12-hour journey between Moscow and this stricken western outpost of the Russian Federation.

Pskov has one of the lowest standards of living in the country, factories without orders, pensioners without pensions, locally garrisoned paratroopers without pay and two loudly independent Baltic countries where the road to the seaside used to be.

So, when the messiah of Russian nationalism, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, came preaching prosperity, the voters came out to listen.

In an election result that has shocked the Russian political establishment and provoked unease in the Baltic states, a 33-year-old political unknown from Mr Zhirinovskiy's radical LDPR party, Yevgeny Mikhailov, has won a crushing victory over the Kremlin's candidate, to become the new governor of Pskov region.

The election was fought on bread-and-butter issues. But the readiness with which the people of Pskov have handed the powerful gubernatorial post to a party that calls for the restoration of Russia's Soviet-era borders is bound to intensify the desperate desire of neighbouring Latvia and Estonia to join Nato — the very step that Russian nationalists warn could provoke conflict.

Mr Mikhailov, a small, self-confident local man who has spent the past three years as an LDPR member of the Duma (parliament) in Moscow, said sanctions were likely if the Baltic states persisted on their present course.

"At some point, if the Baltic countries don't end their current policies, including their attempts to join Nato, trade sanctions will arise of

their own accord, whatever I or the LDPR might want," he said.

"It'll be bad for Pskov, because our economic interests favour co-operation. There is no point in talking about limiting trade now because, for one thing, I couldn't bring it about and, for another, it would threaten the economic well-being of the region I answer for. But as a politician I forecast sanctions will be imposed."

Mr Mikhailov, who dived straight into politics after graduating from Moscow university's history department, split with the liberal anti-Communist movement of the late perestroika years after the USSR's brutal and clumsy attempt in 1991 to prevent Lithuania from breaking away. He took the side of Soviet troops who killed 14 people during an attack on the republic's TV tower.

Though he now presents himself as a moderate, his language in a book published last year, *Burden Of An Imperial Nation*, was that of an irreverent Machiavelli wannabe.

Russia's attempts to recover the Baltic countries, he argued, should begin with open and covert support for attempts by ethnic Russians in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to set up their own self-governing states.

"Having created a series of islands of Russian statehood... these new territorial acquisitions should be used first to settle the problem of

refugees and then, when the time is right, to include them within the empire," he wrote in a chapter headed "The Third World War and the Task of Russian National-Liberals."

At the Latvian consulate in Pskov, consul Valery Zubko chuckled over a video of the Zhirinovskiy propaganda blitzkrieg on the region which, most local pundits say, turned the tide in an election that Mr Mikhailov could never have won by himself.

"Mikhailov never expected to come to power," said Mr Zubko. "He's not ready for it."

With its sleek, minimalist office furniture, carpet tiles and immaculate white walls, a capsule of Scandinavian modernity among the damp, peeling blocks and cratered roads of Pskov, the consulate is an expression of the way Baltics see themselves in relation to the Russians. They think they are smarter, richer, harder-working, more Western, better organised. The staff even have their own kitchen rather than risk lunching at the Russian hotel around the corner.

Pskovians who used to nip across the former Soviet boundary into Estonia or Latvia to go shopping now need to go through a complex and expensive visa application process. As local newspaper editor Vladimir Smirnov put it, it is easier to go shopping in Turkey.



Yevgeny Mikhailov shocked the Kremlin and provoked alarm in the Baltic states by his victory in the election for governor of the Pskov region  
PHOTO: JAMES MECK

Riga shows no sign of giving ethnic Russians in Latvia — a third of the population — full citizenship rights and has refused to renounce its hopeless claim to a slice of Pskov territory. Mr Zubko said there was no reason to worry. "Mikhailov won't be determining the policies of Russia. He might interfere with the improvement in our relations with Russia but the final decision will not be his."

YET, over at 85 Soviet Street, Pskov headquarters of the LDPR, they keep faith with a great Russian future and nurse bitterness over the past. The walls of a campaign war room are crowded with a gallery of me-with-Zhirinovskiy snapshots and Mikhailov memorabilia, including an oil painting of the new governor as Peter the Great.

Within the room, a young former Baltic Russian claimed it was the Lithuanians who began shooting first in 1991.

"I had the misfortune to be born in Lithuania," said Maxim Smirnov, aged 19, an LDPR youth organiser. "Zhirinovskiy was the only one who didn't betray us. He was the only one who didn't forget there were Russians in Lithuania."

Commentators argue that voters in Pskov had little interest in the LDPR's Baltic drama. The electorate clearly believed that Mr

Zhirinovskiy's claim that his control of a large block of votes in Parliament would mean extra government money for them if they backed his candidate. On top of that, Mr Mikhailov's main opponent, the sitting governor Vladislav Tumanov, was a haughty, despised, ineffectual figure.

"Maybe you still don't understand the soul of the Russian," said Yuri Krautner, head of a regional union of small business people.

"People understand they couldn't have a worse governor than Tumanov and if they vote for Zhirinovskiy's man they'll laugh more often. People enjoy Zhirinovskiy's speeches. Laughter is healthy. It provides vitamins."

Editor Smirnov ridiculed the LDPR leader's rhetoric. "People vote with their stomachs," he said. "Whether there'll really be a march to the Indian Ocean I don't know. Whether we'll go into the Baltics or not — it's hardly likely to happen. He says these things to shock the public. People vote for a hunk of bread."

Yet the argument that Pskov voters ignored the LDPR's jingoistic rallying cries and voted on purely economic grounds is not convincing. "There is an underlying belief here that Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania could not survive without Russian raw materials and energy, and that sooner or later they will beg to return to Moscow's embrace."

What in a weak Russia appears a protest vote could, in a stronger future Russia, be something more destabilising.

Pskov has already returned Mr Mikhailov once before as its Member of Parliament, and in 1995 voted for the notorious TV propagandist Alexander Nevzorov, who made a short film in 1991 presenting the heavily armed Soviet troops facing Lithuanian civilians as outnumbered heroes.

Vladlen Smirnov admitted that democracy — "the last illusion of the Russian intellectual" — as Mr Mikhailov called it in his book — was growing strangely on Russian soil. "Our countrymen could get up in the morning with a hangover and go out and vote for the devil," he said.

# China tackles moral rot with a smile

Andrew Higgins in Beijing

LISULI, bus conductor and rising star of China's revived cult of the model worker, is far too busy these days being a celebrity to turn up for work.

On the number 21 bus that was her springboard to stardom, rare is the passenger who cannot tell of the exploits of China's most diligent transport worker; how she rises before dawn, smiles all day and studies into the night.

But rarer still is the passenger who has seen her in the flesh.

On a recent bone-shaking journey across Beijing only one passenger could claim to have witnessed the model worker at work. "I saw her once but that was months ago. It was before she became famous."

Ms Li, aged 35 and mother to the requisite single child, has become chief cheerleader in a national campaign for rectitude and political obedience, an ill-

defined pot-pourri of virtues known in Communist Party jargon as spiritual civilisation.

"At a time of increasing selfishness and indifference she has created a fertile pasture of warmth and human feeling," said the Beijing Youth Daily, which calls Ms Li the "messenger of love."

Such a message might have worked in the 1950s but has little relevance today. An irreverent rock guitarist recently featured the model bus conductor in a rendition of Beautiful Girl — and was banned from performing for three years. He was accused of making "unsavoury gestures" on top of a piano.

Across Beijing, citizens are being bombarded with the slogan "study Li Sulii, achieve first-class service". Ms Li, meanwhile, is too busy preaching to bother much with practice.

"I take this bus every day and

she has never sold me a ticket," said an elderly passenger on her route. "But I watch her on television all the time. She smiles a lot and has a very nice bus. Not like this old thing."

The gap between reality and fantasy is a recurring feature of China's spasmodic campaigns to promote model workers — a gap that may explain why the party usually prefers its heroes dead or fictional. The most famous of the genre is Lei Feng, a 1960s paragon of the People's Liberation Army who declared himself a "rustless screw of the revolution" and then perished when a telephone pole fell on his head.

"As far as the party is concerned, the only good model worker is a dead model worker. Only a corpse is entirely safe," said Geremie Barme, a scholar of contemporary Chinese culture at the Australian National University. "Living models have always been problematic. So

long as someone is still alive they can always say or do the wrong thing."

To protect Ms Li from such perils, the Beijing Municipal Communist Party acts as her agent and chaperon. Its propaganda department fixes her photo opportunities and interviews, and arranges her road-shows and speaking tours.

Ms Li now has only one real rival at the summit of Chinese political correctness, a plodding model plumber from Shanghai called Xu Hu.

"She has to go to many meetings and does not have much time for ordinary work," explained Li Jian, bus depot supervisor and keeper of a permanent shrine to the conductor at Beijing's gargantuan railway station, starting point for the number 21.

A hall has been set aside to house photographs and mementoes marking the milestones in Ms Li's exorbitantly mundane life. The exhibition kicks off with a picture of her induction into the Communist Party in 1988,

taking an oath of loyalty, fist clenched before a red flag.

Perpetually smiling and relentlessly good-natured, Ms Li has joined an exclusive pantheon of heroes. The concept of national model workers was first developed in the 1950s but is now being dusted off by President Jiang Zemin to counter the excesses created by Deng Xiaoping's credo of "to get rich is glorious".

Most Chinese would applaud any serious attempt to stop the country's moral rot. Model workers, though, inspire more despair than hope.

"Chinese bureaucrats speak to the country in a vernacular that has virtually nothing to do with the reality of life in modern China," said Mr Barme. "They treat their own people like cretins. Many are deeply concerned about the terrible corruption and moral collapse. But the party has neither the mechanisms nor even the rhetoric to deal with reality. All it can do is take flight into the fantasies of the past."

Handwritten note in the left margin: "The US this week"



In Brief

**A**TOTAL of 1.76 million homes, more than twice the number of households in East Anglia, will have to be built in the English countryside in the next 20 years for the 4.4 million households expected to be formed over the next 20 years, John Gummer, the Environment Secretary, announced.

**B**ARCOCK International secured £500 million of work for the Rosyth naval dockyard in Scotland under a deal to buy control of the yard from the Ministry of Defence. The deal is thought to be worth £25 million.

**C**HRISTOPHER GAN, aged 15, the schoolboy who triggered a classroom dispute that led to the killing of the headmaster Philip Lawrence, was sentenced to three years for conspiracy to cause grievous bodily harm and wounding a pupil.

**T**HE OIL companies Texaco and Gulf were each fined £100,000 as a result of the explosion and fires at the Pembroke refinery in west Wales two years ago.

**T**HE Arts Council announced a scheme to give away £20 million of National Lottery money to new creative arts projects, some of which could be spent on paying actors' wages. The money will be available for people as well as buildings, for the first time since the lottery was started two years ago.

**C**RAIG ALLEE, a 21-year-old man with spina bifida was rescued by police with stun grenades after being snatched from his home in Liverpool and held in a hotel in north London.

**P**OWER failure on the London Underground brought chaos for thousands of passengers after a double failure of the power supply and the back-up system lasted several hours.

**R**OISIN MCALISKEY, the daughter of former Nationalist MP Bernadette McAliskey, faces extradition to Germany on terrorist charges, including attempted murder in connection with an IRA attack on a British army base earlier this year.

**A** DECISION by British censors to ban a video, *Visions of Ecstasy*, after legal advice that it could be blasphemous, was upheld by the European Court of Human Rights.

**T**HE Labour leadership has proposed limits on the sums political parties can spend. The party also declared that it has received £6 million from business to help campaigning in the run-up to the general election.

**T**HE fashion photographer, Terence Donovan, killed himself at the weekend. He was 60.

# Clarke wins breathing space

Michael White

**J**OHAN MAJOR dramatically caved in to Tory rebels this week to avoid the row over a single European currency overshadowing the Budget.

After days of insisting that it would stand firm, the Government offered a series of concessions to the rebels, including a Commons statement on a single European currency by Kenneth Clarke, the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The shadow chancellor, Gordon Brown, immediately seized on the Treasury statement, saying: "The Government's position seems to be changing from hour to hour. It is clear there is chaos and confusion at the heart of a government which is a direct result of weak leadership."

Mr Major, faced with the worst internal party crisis over Europe since the Maastricht treaty debates, ordered ministers last week to seek ways to placate the rebels.

On Monday the Chancellor won a vital breathing space in his party's running war over Europe. But Mr Clarke's conciliatory Commons statement only served to intensify Eurosceptic pressure on both sides to prevent sterling being sucked into the orbit of the proposed European single currency.

The 80-minute Commons cross-examination of the Chancellor served to ease tensions in the Tory ranks, which had threatened to unsettle the last pre-election Budget

and even to precipitate a no-confidence challenge to the Government's survival.

The feuding Tory factions behaved as though they had looked into the election abyss and drawn back from a public quarrel. But Mr Clarke's insistence that the Cabinet was right to keep open its options on joining the single currency — "there could be advantages in such a move" — drew ironic cheers from Labour and a hostile growl from Tory Eurosceptics.

In the run-up to the European Union's Dublin summit on December 13, their suspicion remains high that, under the proposed "stability pact", Whitehall may be drawn into a system of swingeing EU fines for running persistent budget deficits — even if a future British government decides to stay out of the proposed euro bloc.

Despite Mr Clarke's emphatic, even scornful, rejection of the past week's claims that he had been poised to sign away British options at next week's meeting of EU finance ministers (Ecofin) in Brussels, the sceptics are only half-reconciled by assurances extracted during what John Redwood later described as "a good day's work".

During his Commons grilling Mr Clarke dismissed suggestions that he had been saying one thing in public, another in private. He also complained about leaks that had exposed his negotiating position, and implicitly accused the EU Commi-

sioner, Neil Kinnock, of being the source of a paper provided for Mr Kinnock and his fellow commissioner, Sir Leon Brittan, leaked by Labour to the Sunday newspapers.

Throughout the exchange Mr Clarke, the Cabinet's most outspoken pro-European, assured MPs that he was keen to subject the complex single currency negotiations to the scrutiny and approval of what he called "the parliament of our independent nation state".

Significantly, he offered various reassurances, in addition to last week's promise to place a block, known as a "scrutiny reserve", on any political agreement at Ecofin which could then be passed on to the Dublin heads of government summit.

To the satisfaction of many critics Mr Clarke insisted that claims that majority voting, rather than unanimity, could be used by the euro "ins" to impose fines on the "outs" were incorrect. He promised to seek written assurances, that would prevent the European Court of Justice from eroding British opt-outs. He also confirmed his willingness to engage in a one- or two-day full Commons debate before the Dublin summit.

Behind the scenes the Prime Minister had also worked to re-build bridges with backbenchers, taking the Clarke line when he met Sir Marcus Fox, chairman of the 1922 committee, and senior colleagues.

Italy rejoins ERM, page 23

# Jargoning them into submission

SKETCH  
Simon Hoggart

"I'll be like Bradman playing cricket on the village green," said one Tory left-winger. He was predicting Ken Clarke's appearance at the despatch box, when the Chancellor was called to face the angry Eurosceptics. It was like that Mr Clarke was more like Geoffrey Boycott, offering us interminable boredom interrupted by outbursts of irrational violence.

Up in the distinguished visitors' gallery sat Sir James Goldsmith, looking like Ernst Stavro Blofeld, a little puzzled that Michael Caine seemed to have landed the part of Bond. Next to Sir James was a dark, sinister figure, who turned out to be Patrick Robertson, the famous Eurosceptic.

One expected Sir James to lean over the gallery, stroke his platinum cat, and murmur: "I myself abhor violence in all its forms. Mr Clarke, but my associate Mr Robertson is less fastidious..."

As it was, the Dear Leader and President for Life of the Referendum Party favoured two expressions: a smile which played on his lips like a crocodile after a good lunch, and a sort of exaggerated, cynical mirth. He alternated between these while watching the Chancellor speak.

Mr Clarke blamed the press, notably the Sunday Times, which had misrepresented documents leaked from Brussels. Who had done the leaking? Commissioner Neil Kinnock was his guess, and he would not be sending any more confidential policy papers to that office again — and apart from the birth of his grandchild, that was possibly the best news Mr Kinnock has had all year.

It is the nature of the big parliamentary rows that they take place in reverse. MPs begin at a fever pitch of rage and then calm down. So it was. And you can be pretty sure that the actual debate will be as exciting as a milky drink at bedtime.

For the time being, Mr Clarke jargoned them into submission. He gave them the Euro-zone, the Non-Euro Area Member State and the Stability Pact. He threatened them with the ERM Mark II. He waved the Ecofin EMU in their faces. When they thought they might have got him backing into the ropes, he rallied to hit them with "a debate on a forthwith motion".

At times he was unnervingly frank. He wouldn't want to pay any of the proposed new fines. "We don't want any BSE financial obligations falling on a country already trying to cope with an excessive deficit," he said. He left the sceptic Bill Cash spluttering with the simple line: "My memory's going, I've forgotten your point."

Labour decided it was time to weigh in as well. Peter Shore asked whether he wanted to see a future British government hamstringed like a rate-capped council. Tony Benn warned that single currencies did not necessarily mean political unity.

The dinar hadn't held Yugoslavia together, nor had the dollar prevented the American civil war. (No, you might add, does Monopoly money stop people from occasionally up-ending the board.)



Snow in the Pentlands near Edinburgh after blizzards cut power supplies, closed schools and blocked roads across the north of Britain last week. In Wales, high winds brought down electricity lines and left 8,000 homes without electricity. PHOTOGRAPH: MURDO MACLEOD

# New row over Willetts affair

David Hencke

**T**ONY Newton, the Leader of the House, is expected to set up an inquiry into the Guardian's disclosure of the row on the cash-for-questions inquiry over whether ministers and other MPs should be required to give evidence on oath.

The leak followed five hours of secret deliberations by the standards and privileges committee over evidence given by David Willetts, the Paymaster General, who is accused of trying to influence an earlier inquiry in 1994 into former minister Neil Hamilton.

Secret advice was given by Sir Nicholas Lyell, the Attorney General, to the committee on punitive

sanctions that could follow if MPs giving evidence were found to have lied.

The leak was raised in the House by Sir Terence Higgins, chairman of the Commons liaison committee. He asked the Speaker, Betty Boothroyd, to intervene. Ms Boothroyd called on Mr Newton, the Cabinet minister who chairs the committee, to take the necessary action.

The present cash-for-questions inquiry was set up after a libel action brought against the Guardian by ex-Department of Trade and Industry minister Mr Hamilton and by Ian Greer, a parliamentary lobbyist, collapsed.

The current hearings of the committee are involved in deciding

whether Mr Willetts, then a government whip, broke Commons rules by trying to influence a 1994 parliamentary inquiry into the Hamilton affair.

Some MPs on the committee are arguing that it is essential witnesses give evidence on oath if the inquiry is to be fair and impartial. Sanctions could be imposed if witnesses were found to have lied — including expulsion from Parliament or even prison for perjury. But Sir Nicholas is said to have given confusing advice which has delayed the proceedings.

MPs on the committee are still to decide whether to call former whip, Andrew Mitchell, to give evidence after the leaking of a memo written by him suggesting he was trying to get privileged information about Mr Hamilton's consultations during the 1994 inquiry.

# Humans 'still used in radiation tests'

Owen Bowcott

**E**XPERIMENTS in which human volunteers are injected with radioactive isotopes are still being undertaken for medical research, a former government scientist said this week.

Arthur Morgan, who worked for nearly 40 years at the Atomic Energy Research Establishment at Harwell, revealed he had taken part in 30 such tests without pay.

He was injected with barium 133 and plutonium 237 and inhaled cigarette smoke seeded with traces of radioactive iodine. Now aged 68, he insisted he had never suffered any noticeable ill-effects.

Responding to claims by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament that the Government had secretly conducted experiments on humans, Dr Morgan, a radio-biologist, maintained the research had always been made public.

CND's report, *The Nuclear Guinea Figs*, prompted Matthew Taylor, the Liberal Democrat spokesman on the environment, to call on the Government for an explanation for the 40-year programme of experimentation which involved up to 200 people.

One briefing paper reproduced by CND included a comment in 1989 by Bart Gledhill, at the Lawrence Livermore nuclear weapons re-

search laboratory in the United States. He observed that exposure levels were relatively small, but none the less "could produce a future cancer".

Mr Taylor said: "There are big questions the British have to answer about why they were prepared to carry on experiments on human beings when the US did not do so."

A letter to Michael Portillo, the Defence Secretary, had never been answered, he added. "It is high time ministers explained what risks those volunteers were exposed to, for what purposes, and whether adequate warnings were given to them."

In a statement the MoD con-

firmed that experiments had taken place at Harwell, at the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment at Aldermaston and at the chemical and biological research station at Porton Down since the 1950s.

A spokeswoman said: "There is no evidence of any MoD involvement in unethical radiation experiments on humans. All studies involved volunteers. They have been subject to proper medical safeguards and with the full knowledge of the persons concerned."

Dr Morgan, who retired in 1993, said: "There are still radioactive medical experiments going on at Harwell. They are approved by an ethics committee which includes

members of the Nuclear Radiation Protection Board."

Residual traces of the barium 133 injected into Mr Harwell 10 years ago were still present. The experiment helped calculate the dosage inadvertently assimilated by workers using radium in luminous paint during the war.

The plutonium 237 had been injected to assess doses absorbed by workers in the nuclear industry. On both occasions urine and blood samples had provided information about how the body processed and disposed of radioactive material.

"In all those cases I gave my informed consent," he said. CND's chair, Janet Bloomfield, said: "The Government has consistently misled Parliament, the public and those involved, about what has been done."

# Scientists find hint of mass

Tim Radford

**S**CIENTISTS using an ultraviolet telescope orbiting through space suspect they may be on the track of the missing 90 per cent of the universe.

They have detected radiation from a vast, thick cloud of gas in a cluster of galaxies 300 million light years away. The mass of the gas is, they calculate, that of 10 million million suns.

This gas alone, they believe, could help resolve a long-standing problem of galactic clusters: that they do not seem to be massive enough to behave the way they do. Up to 90 per cent of their mass is "missing".

Missing mass, or dark matter, has kept astronomers happy for years. The behaviour of the 100 billion galaxies in the visible universe, each containing 100 billion stars, can only be explained if the galaxies are up to 100 times heavier than the stars that shine in them.

Scientists have proposed theoretical space monsters like cosmic string, or undetectable particles called wimps, to explain the discrepancy. Others have favoured a universe riddled with black holes or "brown dwarves", stars too small to catch fire.

But Stuart Bowyer of the University of California and Richard Lieu of the University of Alabama reported in the *US Journal of Science* that they used the Extreme Ultraviolet Explorer satellite's telescope to detect awesome levels of "cool" gas in the Coma cluster. Cool is a relative term: its temperature is between 800,000 and 2 million Celsius. The cloud stretches across 2.6 million light years.

The discovery raises big questions. Why is the gas there? Why doesn't it heat up or cool down? "It's right but unexplainable," said Professor Bowyer. "It's up to the theorists to explain where this gas comes from."

The gas provides some of the mass to account for the gravitational glue that binds a cluster.

There may be a lot more gas. The researchers are about to turn the telescope on other clusters to see. "Perhaps the missing mass is there in the form of ordinary matter, and we haven't looked hard enough," said Professor Lieu.

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# Paradox of the Cannabis Cafe

Charles Trueheart in Delfzijl

**A**T THE Paradox Cafe in this North Sea harbor town of 30,000, customers are handed a tip sheet of warnings about cannabis: Do not smoke and drive. Do not smoke and drink. Do not take it across the border. Avoid "space cake" — hashish baked in muffins.

On the other hand, the main menu item at the Cafe Paradox, other than coffee and natural fruit juices, is cannabis. The selection ranges from expensive Moroccan hashish to cheap Dutch marijuana, priced from \$7 to \$15 a gram.

"That's the paradox," explained Ernst Gunst, the cafe's manager. And not the only one.

Cafe Paradox, whose main product is technically illegal in the Netherlands, is a creature of Delfzijl's municipal government, aggressively championed by its mayor and heartily endorsed by police and magistrates.

Opened in September as a non-profit "foundation," the cafe is an experiment in cannabis regulation. The idea is to drive and keep criminal elements out of a business by taking it over, as state liquor stores were designed to do in the United States.

Delfzijl's step is perhaps the biggest yet taken in this already open-minded country toward waging peace on drugs instead of war.

The Netherlands for years has taken a progressive approach to what it calls "soft drugs." The law is known by a term that means "illegal but permitted" — that is, police put the lowest priority on enforcing the sale and use of small amounts of cannabis.

In light of this attitude, Delfzijl officials said they expect their cafe idea to spread across the Netherlands. Three other small towns have similar pilot programs underway.

The Dutch government is taking an open-minded attitude toward the experiments, waiting to see how they work and what local prosecutors report, an official of the Dutch Justice Ministry said.

Today in Holland at least 5 percent of the country's 15 million people are estimated to use a cannabis product regularly. But the use of hard drugs has plummeted, with the addiction rate half that in other European countries.

The tolerant policy toward soft drugs has spawned a ubiquitous fixture across the Netherlands: "coffee shops" and "teahouses" where the real attraction is something else. These establishments do big business in Amsterdam and other cities, including a lively tourist trade of Germans and Americans agog at the freedom to traffic and smoke while police officers stand on the corner looking the other way.

But what the authorities will tolerate in Amsterdam they apparently will not in Delfzijl, a quiet town just a half-hour's drive from the German border.

The bad image of the local coffee shops, the criminal transactions on the wholesale level inherent in running them and the suspicion that harder drugs were also being traded led Mayor Eduard Haaksman to launch a new program for prevention and regulation.

In a single sweep, the town shut down the cannabis trade at free-enterprise places such as De Corner and New Generation and opened the doors of Cafe Paradox.

"The war on drugs — we lost it a long time ago," said Paul Oldenburger, a local businessman and parent. He said he was cautiously open to the Cafe Paradox experiment if it meant the demise of the coffee shops. "These coffee shops, they don't just sell soft drugs. Hard drugs are available too, and it's an easy step from one to the other."

There is no sign outside the new establishment. It is an attractive if subdued space painted in yellow where a steel band plays from speakers and young people sit at tables puffing enormous reefers. Customers have to be 18 to enter.

"Use hashish and marijuana for pleasure and not to combat stress or

insecurity," they are advised on the Paradox flyer. The place closes at 10pm.

The mayor has taken flak from the people he put out of the pot business, and from some parents and other outraged citizens. But he appeared unfazed. "It's a shop where we can discourage youngsters from using drugs, and it's a place where we can control it by having it in one place," Haaksman said. "Also, the shop has to sell only very good quality soft drugs, so that you know what you're getting."

What is the message of an organization that warns about the dangers of drugs and sells them over the counter?

"The message is: Don't do drugs. But if you want to use drugs, do it in a healthy, conscious way," said Gunst. "One thing is for sure. If you forbid it, people still want to use it, like the U.S. during Prohibition."

Gunst is proud of the cafe's offerings, noting that no artificial pesticides or fertilizers were used in their cultivation or manufacture. He said a professor at a nearby university is checking for impurities and the content levels of THC, the psychoactive ingredient in cannabis.

"We think that's important," Gunst said, sitting at a cafe table as he rolled a large, hashish-laden cigarette. "That's why we sell no soft drinks. Coca-Cola is just water and sugar. It's not healthy."

Gunst is especially proud of the "documentary center" he is designing in the back of the cafe — a place

for drug presentations to police officers, doctors and school groups, for discussion of drugs by young people, and with an Internet hookup to access current information about drugs.

The Dutch government is aware that philosophical conundrums have to be addressed. "What are these places selling — legal stuff or not? We have to decide," Justice Ministry spokesman Wilfred Kortman said.

The Dutch government is under pressure from surrounding European Union members to police better the country's commerce in drugs. From Amsterdam's coffee shops and easy street trade, they seep easily over the blurring European borders, where customs procedures are no longer even a formality.

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